

## KASHMIRI PANDITS HAIL DECISION

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Cause for joy: The Kashmiri Hindu Sabha of Telangana activists celebrating the repeal of Article 370, in Hyderabad. K.V.S. Giri

Kashmiri Pandits, displaced from the Valley in the 1990s, on Monday hailed the amendment to Article 370 of the Constitution as a “historic event”, and hoped it would pave the way for their return to the homeland with honour and dignity.

The Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora (GKPD), a body representing the community across the world, said the decision cemented the territorial, political and cultural unity of the Indian Union.

“August 5, 2019 will go down in the history of the country as a day that has put the lasting seal on the sovereignty of Parliament over the entire Indian Union,” it said in a statement.

“The draft Bill presented by Home Minister Amit Shah in Parliament vindicates the ideals of our great leaders like Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Deendayal Upadhyaya, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and others who dedicated or sacrificed their lives for the integrity and sovereignty of India,” the GKPD said.

This is the first time the exiled community has heaved a sigh of relief because its identity, culture and symbols of heritage has found full protection under the Union Territory dispensation, the statement said.

“With this move, the Government of India will be able to bring Jammu and Kashmir nearer to the rest of the nation,” said Manoj Bhan, president of the Jammu and Kashmir Vichar Manch. The community hopes the government will chalk out a map for their return to the Valley soon, he said.

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